

U.S. Misjudged Hanoi's Will, Papers Show

FEELERS

By WILLIAM MCGAFFIN
Chicago Daily News

WASHINGTON — As the U. S. role in the expanding Vietnam war deepened in the spring of 1965, the Russians worked secretly to try to promote a diplomatic solution to the conflict, according to the secret Pentagon study of the war.

The story, as told by the Pentagon analysts, involves a couple of instances — one an initiative by the Soviet Union to reactivate the 1954 Geneva Conference, the other an informal approach made to Pierre Salinger, the former White House press secretary.

On Feb. 17, 1965, a couple of weeks before the U. S. unleashed "rolling thunder," its bombing campaign against North Vietnam, Lord Harlech, then British ambassador in Washington, gave a message to Secretary of State Dean Rusk.

THE SOVIET FOREIGN Office had "approached the British with the suggestion that the UK-USSR (British and Russian) co-chairmanship of the 1954 Geneva Conference might be reactivated in connection with the current Vietnam crisis."

But the State Department attitude at that time, the analysts indicated, was lukewarm. Rusk, for example, sent a message to Gen. Maxwell Taylor, the U. S. ambassador in Saigon, reporting the British approach to him without any evident enthusiasm.

"We would stop short ourselves of proposing formal systematic negotiations," he said, "but assumption of the 1954 co-chairmanship by the two countries would imply that they might

themselves explore possibilities of a solution which we could encourage or otherwise as we see fit."

RUSK OBSERVED that the British Foreign Office "showed itself eager to pick up the Soviet hint and suggested that the British ambassador in Moscow, Sir Humphrey Trevelyan, should make a formal proposal to the Russians on what was described as the 'co-chairmanship gambit.'"

President Lyndon B. Johnson's advisers were confident their air campaign would work, the analysts indicated, and were afraid that the Russians would try to prevent them from continuing the attacks in return for some moderation of Vietcong guerrilla activity.

Eventually the "co-chairman gambit" fell apart. But when it was being pursued, word of it was kept from the Saigon government.

Rusk cabled Taylor: "You should not reveal the possibility of this UK-USSR gambit to GVN (South Vietnam) for the time being. We naturally wish to have it appear entirely as their initiative so that our reply would not show any kind of initiative on our part and would in its content make clear how stiff our views are."

THE SALINGER incident occurred after he had left his White House job. The analysts reported that there was "a rather puzzling informal contact between Pierre Salinger and two somewhat shadowy Soviet officials in Moscow."

"On the evening of May 11 (one full day prior to the inauguration of a brief bombing pause) Salinger, who was in Moscow at the time on private movie production business, was invited to dinner by Mikhail Sagatelyan, whom Salinger had known in Washington during the Kennedy years as the Tass bureau chief and who was at the time assigned to Tass (the Soviet news agency) headquarters in Moscow."

Salinger reported to U. S. Ambassador Foy Kohler in Moscow who in turn relayed his story to Rusk in Washington.

Sagatelyan, it was related, "probed Salinger hard as to whether he was on some kind of covert mission and seemed unconvinced despite the latter's reiterated denials. In any case, Sagatelyan, protesting he was speaking personally, talked at length about Vietnam."

SETTING FORTH a six-point "hypothetical formula for a solution," he asked Salinger's opinion of it.

The solution would involve the United States announcing a temporary suspension of the bombing.

North Vietnam or the Soviet Union or both hailing this as a step toward a reasonable solution.

The Soviet Union interceding with the Vietcong to curtail military activities.

The accomplishment of a de facto ceasefire.

The calling of a conference at which the Vietcong would have an

Working out a new agreement for a broader-based Saigon government not including direct Vietcong participation but elements friendly to them.

SECRETS

By MORTON KONDRACKLE
AND THOMAS B. ROSS
Chicago Sun-Times

WASHINGTON — The top-secret Pentagon Papers conclude that U. S. bombing policy was based on a "colossal misjudgment" of Hanoi's will and that top U. S. civilians had no clear idea how many troops it would take to achieve success in South Vietnam.

These disclosures were made in The New York Times' latest accounts, published today, of the contents of the documents, covering the period from July, 1955 to the fall of 1966.

Because of continually escalating demands for men, the Pentagon study says, it is unclear whether U. S. military commanders were concealing their true estimates of required manpower or did not know THEMSELVES.

"IT CAN BE hypothesized," the Times quotes the Pentagon analysis as saying, "that from the outset . . . some military men felt

that winning a meaningful victory would require something on the order of 1,000,000 men.

"Knowing that this would be unacceptable politically, it may have seemed a better bargaining strategy to ask for increased deployments incrementally.

"An alternative explanation is that no one really foresaw what the troop needs would be and that the ability of the (North Vietnamese and Vietcong) to build up their effort was consistently underrated."

The papers show that Gen. William C. Westmoreland, U. S. military commander in Vietnam, escalated his troop requests from a total of 175,000 in June, 1965 to 275,000 that July, to 493,000 in December and to more than 512,000 in June, 1966.

WESTMORELAND'S requests — and President Lyndon B.

Johnson's approval of all but the last request — were concealed from the American public, according to the Times account.

The Times account shows that top U. S. civilians who had recommended war as a strategy in Vietnam and counseled its escalation, gradually became discouraged with the results.

Like The New York Times, The Washington Post carried two stories from the Pentagon study today.

The first dealt with the late President John F. Kennedy's initial Vietnam decisions in 1961 and contained no new information beyond that disclosed by the Chicago Sun-Times last week.

THE SECOND Post story, covering the 1964-67 period, described U. S. difficulties in dealing with a succession of South Vietnamese regimes following the U. S. — encouraged downfall of President Ngo Dinh Diem.

The Post story included a number of new details, including a secret State Department cable warning that the American people were "fed up" with the "insane, bickering" caused by Air Marshal (now vice president Nguyen Cao Ky).

The latest New York Times story contained these new disclosures:

The Pentagon analysis declares that the Johnson administration's continuous expansion of bombing raids in North Vietnam in 1965 and 1966 was based on a "colossal misjudgment" of Hanoi's will and capabilities.

CHRONICLE

E - 279,608

S - 333,807

STATINTL

LBJ Rejected Use Of 'Famine Plan' on North

Chronicle News Services

A "famine" plan was urged on President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965 as a way to bring North Vietnam to its knees. The plan was not used.

The Associated Press said this was disclosed in papers made public by Sen. Mike Gravel, D-Alaska, who says he has been furnished a copied copy of the purloined Pentagon papers.

The famine plan was suggested by John McNaughton, then an assistant secretary of Defense. McNaughton said in a memo that North Vietnam's intricate lock and dam system was particularly sensitive.

Destroying it, flooding rice fields and raising the specter of national famine, if correctly handled, could "offer promise," McNaughton suggested.

The documents quoted his memo as saying: "It should be studied. Such destruction does not kill or drown people. By shallow-flooding the rice, it leads after time to widespread starvation of more than a million unless food is provided."

This, the memo added, the United States could offer to do "at the conference table."

Though McNaughton's plan was not used, American intervention escalated in 1965.

Other disclosures today:

◦ The Washington Post said the Pentagon told President John F. Kennedy in 1961 that an escalated war in Vietnam, including the intervention of Red China and Hanoi, presumably required no more than 205,000 U.S. troops. Total U.S. troop commitment in Vietnam eventually swelled to more than half a million, even though Peking never did intervene directly in the conflict.

◦ The New York Times reported that Gen. William C. Westmoreland's estimates of the troops he needed in Viet-

nam more than tripled between June, 1965, and June, 1966, because the enemy's ability was "consistently underrated."

The Times said U.S. military commanders in 1965-66 were confident of victory and Westmoreland, commander of all U.S. forces in Vietnam, predicted he could defeat the Communists "by the end of 1967." Westmoreland's troop requests increased steadily, from a total of 175,000 men in June, 1965, to 275,000 that July, to 443,000 in December and then to 542,000 the following June.

◦ The Times reported that the Johnson administration decided in 1966 to bomb Hanoi's oil-storage facilities despite warnings from the Central Intelligence Agency that the raids would not "cripple Communist military operations." Instead, the Pentagon analysts wrote, Washington apparently accepted the military's estimate that the bombing would "bring the enemy to the conference table or cause the insurgency to wither from lack of support." But the flow of men and supplies to the South continued "undiminished," the Times said.

◦ The Associated Press said that when Buddhists and dissident South Vietnamese army troops seized Da Nang and Hue, in May, 1965, Vice-Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky ordered troops to quell both uprisings without consulting the U.S. embassy. (Ky is now vice-president of South Vietnam). Marine Lt. Gen. Lewis W. Walt reacted with the threat to order U.S. jets to shoot down any South Vietnamese aircraft attacking the dissidents.

◦ The Times said the study reported that a Defense Department seminar of 47 sci-

lists concluded in August, 1966, that the bombing of the North was having "no measurable effect." As an alternative, they suggested that an elaborate electronic barrier be built along the demilitarized zone to inhibit troop and vehicle infiltration.

◦ The Times said Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara made his first recommendation against filling a troop request from Gen. Westmoreland after McNamara returned from a trip to South Vietnam in the fall of 1966.

◦ The Associated Press said that by 1967, the gap between an increasingly dovish McNamara and his military chiefs over bombing policy was growing. A McNamara memorandum to Johnson in May that year opposed intensified bombing. Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, retorted that a cutback in the bombing could be interpreted as an "aerial Dien Bien Phu," the document said. Soon afterward, Johnson sided with the chiefs and McNamara was on his way out.

◦ The Boston Globe said that a few days before the Communists' Tet offensive in late January, 1968, Gen. Westmoreland reported that "the friendly war picture gives rise to optimism for increased successes in 1968." But five weeks later, the Globe said, a Central Intelligence Agency estimate made to Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford said that, assuming no change in U.S. policy or force levels, "it is out of the question for U.S.-GVN (Government of South Vietnam) forces to clear South Vietnam of Com-

munist forces."

◦ The Associated Press said Johnson's advisers told him in February, 1965, that "defeat appears inevitable" unless the United States took new action. Then came the full-scale U.S. bombing of the North.

◦ United Press International said the Johnson administration participated in or backed a series of military actions against North Vietnam during the 1964 presidential election year that were kept secret at the time. UPI based its story on documents provided by Gravel and said the "unpublicized" actions were taken "primarily as low-key indications to the enemy of the U.S. willingness and capability to employ increased force if necessary."

THE PAINFUL LESSONS

The Pentagon papers may already have quickened the pace of this country's disengagement from Vietnam. While the documents mainly confirm what the public has come to think about the war, the intimate detail on some of the reasoning that led to the deepening U.S. involvement, as well as the calculated efforts of the Johnson administration to play down the extent of that commitment, probably swung critical votes in favor of the Mansfield amendment that passed the Senate last week. This amendment calls for the withdrawal of all American forces from Indochina within nine months, provided this country's prisoners of war are released.

Whatever the immediate repercussions in Congress, the papers reinforce some of the lessons the country has been drawing from the painful Vietnam experience. The papers reveal, for example, a serious misappraisal by the President and his closest advisers of the nature of the North Vietnamese and of the guerrilla movement in South Vietnam. Despite repeated advice to the contrary by the Central Intelligence Agency, the President and his advisers naively believed that the Rolling Thunder air raids of early 1965 might suffice to bring an agrarian North Vietnam to its knees and force it to call off the war in the South. As it turned out, the air raids only stiffened Hanoi's attitude.

What this brings home is a certain lack of humility in the government's perspective on "backward" places, as well as a refusal to heed its own vast intelligence apparatus. In any future conflict, an American government will surely show a far greater awareness that non-Western nations can react in unusual ways to diplomatic and military pressures.

Another lesson is that the executive branch needs rigorous new procedures for reviewing its basic assumptions and objectives. The Pentagon documents show that the whole premise on which our incredibly costly and divisive involvement in Vietnam was based—the domino theory—was almost never questioned once it had been accepted. One of the dissenters was Undersecretary of State George Ball, who in a lengthy 1965 memorandum questioned whether the downfall of South Vietnam really would lead to the loss of all of Southeast Asia, and warned against "a protracted war involving an open-ended commitment of U.S. forces."

The most obvious lesson of all is that an American President must never again take the nation to war without the explicit authorization of the Congress and the support of the American people. In the fateful months of spring and early summer 1965, after he had already ignored the advice of allies and decided to commit U.S. ground troops to Vietnam, President Johnson chose to keep both the Congress and the public in the dark for a dangerously long period. Shortly after he had decided to send nearly 200,000 troops, thereby crossing his Rubicon to an Asian land war, he told the press that the buildup "does not imply any change in policy."

The irony is that in mid-1965 both the public and Congress would probably have supported the sending of troops. The vote in Congress might not have been as overwhelming as in the case of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution the previous summer, and Mr. Johnson's options to escalate might have been narrower. But at least there would have been a clear mandate, and in seeking that mandate the Johnson administration would have had to submit its policies to much closer examination than they in fact received.

The Congress, of course, is partly to blame for allowing war-making to become an almost exclusively presidential prerogative. It also failed, as did the press, to demand and get more information in those fateful months of 1965. Only now is the Congress beginning to reassert its constitutional role, as the Senate passage of the Mansfield amendment shows. But the Pentagon papers underscore the need for a permanent redressing of the balance along the lines of several bills recently introduced in the Senate. These would curtail the President's power to use this country's armed forces in future conflicts without a specific congressional authorization, and thus would bar a future President and his ardent scenario-writers from acting without the checks and balances that the framers of the Constitution designed.

STATINTL

KEY TEXTS FROM PENTAGON'S VIETNAM STUDY

Notes From McNamara Memo On Course of War in 1966

Excerpts from notes accompanying the Pentagon study, from a memorandum for President Johnson from Secretary McNamara, "Military and Political Actions Recommended for South Vietnam," Dec. 7, 1965.

Following are texts of key documents accompanying the Pentagon's study of the Vietnam war, covering the period late 1965 to the summer of 1966. Except where excerpting is specified, the documents are printed verbatim, with only unmistakable typographical errors corrected.

... We believe that, whether or not major new diplomatic initiatives are made, the US must send a substantial number of additional forces to VN if we are to avoid being defeated there. (30 Nov program; concurred in by JCS)

IV. Prognosis assuming the recommended deployments

Deployments of the kind we have recommended will not guarantee success. Our intelligence estimate is that the present Communist policy is to continue to prosecute the war vigorously in the South. They continue to believe that the war will be a long one, that time is their ally, and that their own staying power is superior to ours. They recognize that the US reinforcements of 1965 signify a determination to avoid defeat, and that more US troops can be expected. Even though the Communists will continue to suffer heavily from GVN and US ground and air action, we expect them, upon learning of any US intentions to augment its forces, to boost their own commitment and to test US capabilities and will to persevere at higher level of conflict and casualties (US KIA with the recommended deployments can be expected to reach 1000 a month).

If the US were willing to commit enough forces—perhaps 600,000 men or more—we could ultimately prevent the DRV/VC from sustaining the conflict at a significant level. When this point was reached, however, the question of Chinese intervention would become critical. (We are generally agreed that the Chinese Communists will intervene with combat forces to prevent destruction of the Communist regime in the DRV. It is less clear whether they would intervene to prevent a DRV/VC defeat in the South.) The intelligence estimate is that the chances are a little better than even

that, at this stage, Hanoi and Peiping would choose to reduce the effort in the South and try to salvage their resources for another day; but there is an almost equal chance that they would enlarge the war and bring in large numbers of Chinese forces (they have made certain preparations which could point in this direction).

It follows, therefore, that the odds are about even that, even with the recommended deployments, we will be faced in early 1967 with a military standoff at a much higher level, with pacification still stalled, and with any prospect of military success marred by the chances of an active Chinese intervention.

(memo of 24 Jan 66: JCS believe that "the evaluation set forth in Par. 7 is on the pessimistic side in view of the constant and heavy military pressure which our forces in SEA will be capable of employing. While admittedly the following factors are to a degree imponderables, they believe that greater weight should be given to the following:

a. The cumulative effect of our air campaign against the DRV on morale and DRV capabilities to provide and move men and materiel from the DRV to SVN.

b. The effects of constant attack and harassment on the ground and from the air upon the growth of VC forces and on the morale and combat effectiveness of VC/PAVN forces.

c. The effect of destruction of VC base areas on the capabilities of VC/PAVN forces to sustain combat operations over an extended period of time.

d. The constancy of will of the Hanoi leaders to continue a struggle which they realize they cannot win in the face of progressively greater destruction of their country.

U.S. Underrated Enemy, Times Says

The Pentagon's secret study of the Vietnam War indicates that the rapid expansion of American forces in 1965 and 1966 occurred because "no one really foresaw that the troop needs in Vietnam would be" and because the ability of the enemy forces "to build up their effort was consistently underrated," the New York Times said today in its sixth article on the study.

"It would seem," the Pentagon study asserts, that the American planners would have been "very sensitive to rates of infiltration and recruitment by the (Viet Cong and North Vietnamese army); but very little analysis was, in fact, given to the implications of the capabilities of the VC-NVA in this regard."

As a result of the Unanticipated enemy buildup, the Pentagon study discloses, Gen. William C. Westmoreland's troop requests jumped from a total of 175,000 in

June, 1965, to 275,000 that July, to 443,000 in December and to more than 542,000 the following June.

Not Made Public

Neither the requests of the American commander in Vietnam nor President Lyndon B. Johnson's rapid approval of all but the last of them was made public at the time, the Times says.

At the same time, the Times says, the Johnson administration's continual expansion of the air war during 1965 and 1966 was based on a "colossal misjudgment" about the bombing's effect on Hanoi's will and capabilities.

In particular, the study discloses that the administration's decision in 1965 to bomb North Vietnam's oil-storage facilities was made despite repeated warning from the Central Intelligence Agency that such action would not "cripple Communist military operations."

Instead, the Times says, Washington apparently accepted the military's estimate that the bombing would "bring the enemy to the conference table or cause the insurgency to wither from lack of support." But the flow of men and supplies to the South continued "undiminished."

The Times article says that the Pentagon study of this period of the escalation in the air and on the ground—from July 1965 to the fall of 1966—also makes these disclosures:

American military commanders were confident of victory. Westmoreland, for example, told Washington in July 1965 that by using a search-and-destroy strategy he could defeat the enemy "by the end of 1967." And, the

same month, the Joint Chiefs of Staff assured Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara that "there is no reason we cannot win if such is our will."

High-level civilian authorities, including McNamara, began to have serious doubts about the effectiveness of both the air and ground war as early as the fall of 1965, but they continued to recommend escalation as the only acceptable policy, despite their doubts.

A secret Defense Department seminar of 47 scientists—"the cream of the scholarly community in technical fields"—concluded in the summer of 1966 that the bombing of North Vietnam had had "no measurable effect" on Hanoi. The scientists recommended building an electronic barrier between North and South Vietnam as an alternative to the bombing. McNamara successfully proposed building a barrier.

Other Articles

There were these other stories based on Pentagon papers:

• The Chicago Daily News said that as the U.S. role in the war deepened in the spring of 1965, the Russians worked secretly to try to promote a diplomatic solution to the conflict, according to the Pentagon study.

The story, as told by the Pentagon analysts, involves a couple of instances—one an initiative in February 1965 by the Soviet Union through Britain to reactivate the 1954 Geneva conference, the other an informal approach made to Pierre Salinger, former White House press secretary.

• The Washington Post said its material showed:

1. The U.S. government was frustrated continually in its ef-

orts to strengthen South Vietnam in 1964-67 by weak and short-lived Saigon governments.

2. McNamara and the Joint Chiefs of Staff told President John F. Kennedy late in 1961 it was assumed the largest U.S. force that would be needed in Vietnam should Hanoi and Peking intervene would "not exceed six divisions, or about 205,000 men."

• The Boston Globe said that a few days before the Communists' Tet offensive in late January 1968, Gen. William C. Westmoreland, the U.S. commander in Vietnam, reported that "the friendly war picture gives rise to optimism for increased successes in 1968."

But five weeks later, The Globe said, a Central Intelligence Agency estimate made to Defense Secretary Clark Clifford said that, assuming no change in U.S. policy or force levels, "it is out of the question for U.S. GVN Government of South Vietnam forces to clear South Vietnam of Communist forces."

• The St. Louis Post-Dispatch said a sharp dispute erupted between military and civilian officials in 1967 over a request that 85,000 to 200,000 additional American troops be sent to Vietnam.

The Post-Dispatch quoted the Pentagon study as saying there was quick opposition from the late John T. McNaughton, then assistant secretary of Defense in charge of international security affairs.

McNaughton, the newspaper said, sent a memorandum to President Johnson saying there was a widespread belief that "the establishment is out of its mind" and that sending more troops to Vietnam would add to this feeling.